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II. *Description of the Ruins of Buddha Gáya.* By DR. FRANCIS  
BUCHANAN HAMILTON, M.R.A.S.

(Extracted from his Report of a Survey of South Bihar.)

Read May 5, 1827.

*Buddha Gáya* was probably, at one time, the centre of religion in India, and the residence of a powerful king. I am informed by the *mahanta* of the *Sannyásís*, who now possesses the great convent at the place, that when his predecessor *Chétan Gíri* came, which may be perhaps one hundred and twenty years ago, it was entirely overrun with bushes and trees; and the sect of *Buddha*, in its vicinity, may be considered as completely extinct. A few persons, indeed, come occasionally from distant countries to visit its ancient monuments. Last year (1811) a man of some rank, with several attendants, came from a country called *Tamsa-dwíp-mahá-amarapura-paigú*, sent by *Mahá-dharma-rájá*, in the sixty-seventh year of his age, a *Cshatriya* of the family of the sun. This is, no doubt, the king of the Burmas; and hence we infer that the old man, since the year 1795, when I visited his capital, has been induced to set up the doctrine afresh. In the year 1795 the priests of *Buddha* were seriously alarmed at the influence which the *Bráhmans* had then acquired.

Some years before, the king of Ava sent two messengers, who, in speaking *Hindustání*, called themselves *Vazīrs*, by which I know they meant officers of government. They were in search of the holy places rendered remarkable by the actions of GAUTAMA, and took with them the water of many sacred streams and pools, to form a bath for their master.

Both these people had books, by the assistance of which they pretended to trace the holy places and to detail their history.

It would appear that the *Sannyásís* have, in some degree, been infected with the superstition of the place, and confounded by its numerous images, which have struck them with awe. The first *mahanta* resided in the ruin of the temple; and his successors have purposely erected several small buildings, both near the old temple and in their convent, where they have

placed many of the most remarkable and entire images ; and they have put in the walls of the buildings raised for other purposes, a still greater number, of both images and inscriptions. This, the *mahanta* says, was done partly with a view to ornament, and partly with a view to preserve the images from injury ; both of which views might have been unaccompanied by religious awe : but that this last has had some effect, I am persuaded, from several circumstances : 1st, the *mahanta* always spoke of GAUTAMA by the names of MUNI, or BHAGAVÁN, the former signifying holy, and the latter, deity. 2dly, he continued to harbour and support one of his *sannyásis*, who had been converted by the messengers from Ava, and now altogether rejects the doctrines of the orthodox. (This person accompanied me to such of the places in the district as had been pointed out to him as holy by the messengers from Ava, and told me what he recollected of their discourse.) 3dly, the *mahanta* gives an allowance to a family of *Rájputs* which acts as *pújáris* to the temple ; and not only takes care of various small buildings erected by his predecessors among the ruins, and of the sacred tree, but offers flowers and water to *Mahámuni*, and preserves the image from injury. These *Rájputs* are orthodox, and reconcile their duty to their consciences by having given orthodox names to all the images of which they have charge, and by considering *Mahámuni* as an incarnation of VISHNU.

In my account of the religion of the Burmas,\* it is mentioned that four great lawgivers, or gods of the sect of Buddha, have appeared on this earth ; and, according to the Italian orthography of the missionary Sangermanno, these persons are named *Chauchaom*, *Gonagom*, *Gaopa*, and *Godama* ; the doctrine of the latter being alone followed in that country. In Ceylon the same is the case ; and the names of the four lawgivers, according to Captain Mahony's orthography,† are *Kakoosandeh*, *Konagammeh*, *Kaserjeppe*, and *Gautemeh*. These names are, no doubt, the same with those given above, only differently corrupted ; but the appellations assigned to the four lawgivers of the sect by the converted *sannyási* are very different. He calls them *Mahámuni*, *Chándúmuni*, *Sákyamuni*, and *Gautamamuni* ; all of whom were *Buddhas*, that is, very holy persons : but there have been many other such persons ; and he says that, as *Buddha* is merely a title common to many, it is highly improper to speak of such a person as *Buddha* having been born at such or such a time, or having performed certain actions ; and, in fact,

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\* As. Res. vol. vi. p. 269.

† Ibid. vol. vii. p. 32.

when I was in Ava, I very seldom heard the term *Buddha* used. The same would also seem to be the case in Ceylon : for although Captain Mahony generally calls GAUTAMA by the name of *Boodha*, yet that is probably in compliance with the common custom of the Hindus : and in his account there is a passage (p. 39) which would seem to condemn the practice as improper. In the *Amarakósha* this doctrine mentioned by the convert is also fully implied. GAUTAMA is not mentioned among the synonyms of *Buddha*, which are, *Sarvagna*, *Sugata*, *Buddha*, *Dharmarāja*, *Tathágata*, *Samantabhadra*, *Bhagaván*, *Márajit*, *Locajit*, *Jina*, *Shatabhigna*, *Daśabala*, *Adváyavadi*, *Vindýaka*, *Muníndra*, *S'rivvanah*, *S'ástá*, and *Muní*, but he is called a *Muni*, and might have been in the same manner called a *Buddha*, a *Bhagaván*, or any other of the above-mentioned synonyms ; but, in speaking of him, such appellations should be joined to some of his various names, as *Sákyamuni*, *Gautama-Buddha*, or the like. These names, by which GAUTAMA is known according to the *Amarakósha*, are *S'ákyamuni*, *S'ákyasimha*, *Sarvārthasiddha*, *Sauddhódani*, *Gautama*, *Arkabandhu*, and the son of *Máyá-devi*. It must be observed, that in the commentary (*tíká*) annexed, this person is said to have been descended from *Sákya*, who by the convert is called the third lawgiver of the *Buddhas*, and must not be confounded with his descendant, one of whose names is, indeed, very similar.

Among the orthodox *Hindus*, *Buddha* is not considered as synonymous with *Bhagaván*, a deity, or *Muni*, a saint, but is always spoken of as one personage, an incarnation of VISHNU ; and in an inscription found at *Buddha Gáyá*, of which a translation has been published in the Asiatic Researches (vol. i. p. 284), this is fully stated. It is, therefore, mentioned by the author of the inscription, that *Buddha*, the incarnation of a part of VISHNU, and the same with *Hari*, appeared at the commencement of the *Kali-yug*, in a wild and dreadful forest, and that *Amara*, one of the nine jewels of the court of VIKRAMADITYA, having discovered this place of the supreme being in the forest, caused an image to be made and a holy temple to be constructed ; and therein were set up the divine foot of VISHNU, the images of the *Pándus*, of *Brahmá*, and the rest of the divinities. This place, according to the inscription, is called *Buddha Gáyá*, and the forefathers of him who shall perform the *śraddha* at this place shall obtain salvation, as is mentioned in the *Váyu-purán*. And that it may be known by a self-evident testimony that AMARA erected the house of *Buddha*, the author of the inscription has recorded the event on a stone, in the year of the era of *Vikrama*

1005 (A.D. 948). As AMARA and VIKRAMA are usually considered contemporary, and as the circumstance is expressly stated in the inscription, it might be considered as very strange, how an inscription engraved 1005 years after the time of *Amara* could be considered as a testimony of that person having erected the temple; but Mr. Bentley, in his treatise in the eighth volume of the Asiatic Researches (page 242), has shown that *Amara* lived long after the commencement of the era of *Vikrama*, and not far from the time here assigned; it may therefore be alleged, that the inscription was made by AMARA, and that this person built the temple of *Mahámuni*. That AMARA may have built the present temple is very probable; but that he could have composed this inscription, appears to me impossible. It mentions that, in the temple built by AMARA, that person placed images of five sons of *Pánda*; but the small building containing these is evidently a very recent work, in which some old images of the *Buddhas* have been placed, and now named after these heroes. Besides if AMARA built the great temple, he must have been of the sect of *Buddha*; and the story of a *Buddha-Avatár* is considered by these heretics as altogether void of truth. That AMARA was not orthodox, I am told, is clear, from his having omitted, in the beginning of the *Amarakósha*, to use any sign of a true believer. And that he was of the sect of the *Buddhas*, I am assured, is proved, by the synonyms which, as I have mentioned above, he gives for a *Buddha* and for GAUTAMA; and farther, these synonyms are not compatible with his having been the author of the inscription in question. I have no doubt, therefore, that this inscription is modern, and was composed by some person of the sect of VISHNU, and has been erected to account for the continuance of the worship paid at this place to the *pippali* tree, which, in compliance with ancient superstition, has been ordered in the *Gáya Mahátmya*. I presume that it is on some such authority as this, that certain theorists have imagined the followers of the *Buddhas* to be a branch of the sect of VISHNU. The inscription in question has probably been removed by the person who transmitted a copy to the Asiatic Researches, as I met with none such.

The sect of *Buddha*, as well as the orthodox Hindus, believe that this earth is now in the fourth age of its existence, and that another age will come. Each age has had a lawgiver; and GAUTAMA's authority, according to the Burmas and Ceylonese, is now established. They therefore commence the *Kali-yug*, or fourth age, with his appearance; and the different systems on that subject have occasioned various periods to be assigned for

that event. It was agreed by both of the parties that came from Ava, that GAUTAMA resided at Buddha Gayá, and that, at his desire, a temple was built by DHARMA ASÓKA, king of *Pádaripuk*, who held his court at the place. The visitant who came last, according to the *Mahanta*, placed this event, or the commencement of the *Kali-yug*, about 2,100 years before the year 1811, while the convert gave 5,000 years for the era. This latter date was evidently in conformity with the opinions prevailing now in India, the convert being unwilling to cede in antiquity to the pretensions of the Bráhmans. The computations of Ceylon and Siam place *Gautama* in the sixth century before the birth of Christ, which I take to be his real era; for the *Mahanta* said that he could not speak with precision concerning the date which his visitors from Ava gave, as he had omitted to take it in writing. It is said by the convert, that the temple is not dedicated to GAUTAMA but to *Mahámuni*, or the earliest lawgiver of the present earth: and he said that the messengers from Ava merely venerated the place on account of its having been the residence of GAUTAMA, considering the influence of *Mahámuni* to be extinct.

That a temple may have been built here in the time of GAUTAMA, and that it may have been dedicated to *Mahámuni*, and that perhaps some of its remains may be found among the ruins; is highly probable; but that the present edifice is so ancient, is more than doubtful. I think it, however, probable that, from that time, the temple did not go entirely to ruin until the overthrow of the *Pál Rájás*, and was repaired, or perhaps in a great measure rebuilt, from time to time, as it went to decay, being the chief seat of the religion which seems for many ages to have predominated in this country; on which account it was called *Mahábuddha* by the messengers from Ava. The tradition, already mentioned, of a temple having been built by *Amarasingha*, in the tenth century of the Christian era, seems to me exceedingly probable, if referred to the great building which is now in the last stage of decay compatible with any thing like a preservation of original form.

I now proceed to mention the present appearance of the ruins, which are situated a few hundred yards west from the *Nitaján* river, on a plain of great extent. They consist of two parts, situated north and south from each other.\* That to the north is the largest, being 1,482 feet by

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\* A plan of the ruins is deposited in the East-India Company's Museum (No. 77).

1,006 in its greatest dimensions, and is called the *rájast'hán* or palace. On the east, north, and west faces, are traces of a ditch ; and on the west and south are remains of an outer wall or rampart, with the appearance of there having been a ditch between it and the palace : but by far the greater part of the building seems to have been a large castle or palace, which probably contained many small courts, although these have been entirely obliterated by the operation of time. Except where there are traces of a double wall and ditch, the whole is now an uniform terrace, consisting chiefly, as is said, of bricks, but covered with soil. Nor is there any reason to suppose that the kings of *Magadha* ever lived here since the time of *Dharma Asóka* or his immediate successors. On this ruin has lately, but at different periods, been erected a building containing two temples, with an adjoining habitation. One of the temples contains the hideous *Jaganná'h*, and was built by the father of the present occupant ; the other is a temple of *Ráma*, built by *Ganga Báí*, who died a year or two ago.

Immediately south from the palace, and separated from it by a road, was the temple, which has left a ruin about 800 feet from east to west, and about 480 feet from north to south. This also seems to have consisted of various courts, now mostly reduced to irregular heaps of brick and stone ; for immense quantities of materials have been removed. The largest heap now remaining is at the north-east corner, where there is a very large terrace, on which are two modern small temples. The one farthest east is called *Vágiswarí*, and was erected by one of the *Mahantas* of the great convent of *Sanmyásis*. The image placed in it was dug from the ruins ; and in its new name no attention has been paid even to sex, as it represents an armed male, while *Vágiswarí* is the goddess of eloquence. The history of the other temple, called that of *Tárádévi*, is similar. The image which has been selected, in place of having the form of *Tárá*, one of the most hideous of the female destructive powers, represents a mild-looking prince standing on a throne supported by seven *Buddhas*.\* At the east end of this terrace, in order to procure materials for building, there is now forming a great excavation. The workmen have laid open a chamber of brick, a cube of about twenty feet, without window, door, or stair, which could only have been intended for a tomb. Although the followers of *Gautama* in Ava burn the dead, yet the bones and ashes are always, I

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\* A drawing of this image is deposited at the East-India Company's Museum (No. 92).

believe, buried ; and I know that those of the priests, at least, are preserved in monuments : and the custom seems to have prevailed among the Buddhists of India, for the late Mr. Duncan informs us,\* that in digging into extensive ruins about four miles north from *Banáras*, an inscription was found, along with some bones, in an urn, and an image of a *Buddha* ; and Mr. Duncan rationally conjectured that these bones belong to some votary of *Buddha*, which indeed is confirmed by the inscription ; it terminates with the sentence usual as a form of dedication on the images of this district, and mentions that ŚR'ĪRA PÁL, and his elder brother BASANTA PÁL, king of *Gour*, in the year 1083 of Sambat (A.D. 1062), came to *Kási*, performed worship, enriched the city, and ordered all those who did not follow the Buddhas to embrace that sect. The chamber, therefore, now opened in the ruins of *Mahábuddha*, was in all probability a tomb.

South from the terrace, and separated from it by a road, which is said to have been covered by an arch, and to have extended all the way to the river, has been a large range of buildings ; but the greater part of the materials has been removed, and there only remain some heaps of broken bricks and images, one of which† is very large and curious. It seems to me to represent a prince who has lost his wife, and she is figured lying above his head, and attended by two mourners. The inscription contains merely the usual form of dedication. It is possible that this may have been the royal sepulchre, or at least the place where the monuments of the princes were placed. South from thence has been a small tank.

The arched road above-mentioned led between the two masses now described, into the area of the great *Mandir*, or shrine ; the only part of the building that remains at all entire. On the right, as you enter the area, is a small chamber of brick, which contains an image, and has every appearance of being modern ; which is also the case with two small chambers on the left ; but one of them is evidently alluded to in the inscription given in the first volume of the Asiatic Researches, lately quoted. This, which is nearest the entrance, contains several large images, said to have been collected from various parts of the ruins, and built into the wall : five of them, representing an equal number of *Buddhas*, sitting in the usual manner, are commonly said to represent the five supposed sons of *Pándu*.

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\* As. Res. vol. v. p. 131.

† East-India Company's Museum. No. 98.



One of them seems clearly to me a funeral monument.\* The dead body is laid over the head of the *Muni* or *Buddha*, through whose favour he may be supposed to have reached the upper regions, and is accompanied by two mourners. The inscription is not thoroughly understood by my people, and some of the letters are defaced. It commences with the form of dedication usual among the *Buddhas*, but all that follows is interpreted in quite a different manner by each of three pandits whom I consulted.

The other small chamber is the tomb of the first Mahanta of the convent of *sannyásís*.

Between these buildings and the porch of the great shrine is lying a stone, containing the impression of a *Buddha's* feet, and by the convert called *Buddhapad*; but there can be little doubt that this is the *Vishmupad* alluded to in the first volume of the Asiatic Researches. It has evidently been taken from the ruins, several similar having been carried thence to the convent; and round it many images have been heaped. By this mark of the deity's presence is lying a stone, which contains an inscription of considerable length.† Several of the images collected here have inscriptions. The most remarkable image‡ is one called *Sabítrí* (a goddess), but which seems to be a male votary of the *Buddhas*, having a *Muni* seated on his crown, for he resembles a prince. The inscriptions mention no person's name, but invoke the *Buddhas*.

On a male figure§ at the same place, now called *Saraswatí* (a goddess), is the usual pious sentence of the *Buddhists*.

The great shrine, or *Mandír*, is a slender quadrangular pyramid of great height; but its summit is broken, and a part hangs over in a very singular manner. This spire is, on three sides, surrounded by a terrace about twenty-five or thirty feet high, and the extreme dimensions of which are seventy-eight feet wide by ninety-eight long, and one end of this terrace towards the east has covered the porch; but that has fallen, and brought down the part of the terrace by which it was covered.

A stair from each side of the porch led up to the terrace, on which there was a fine walk round the temple, leading to the second story of the shrine in front, and to a large area behind, on which is planted a celebrated *píppal* tree (*Ficus religiosa*). As this is still an object of worship,

\* E. I. C's. Mus. No. 82.

† Ibid. No. 113.

‡ Ibid. No. 91.

§ Ibid. No. 99.

and frequented by pilgrims from Gáyá, as I have already mentioned, the north side of the terrace has been repaired as a road; and some zealous person has lately built a stair on the outside, so that the orthodox may pass up without entering the porch, and thus seeing the hateful image of *Buddha*. The *Mandir* has been covered with plaster, some remains of which shew that it has been subdivided into numberless projecting corners, petty mouldings, and niches, each containing the image of a *Buddha* in plaster; and on each projecting corner has been placed a stone somewhat like a bee-hive,\* having a Buddha carved on each of its four faces, with a hole in the top for incense. The number of such now scattered over the country is almost inconceivable. The porch has always been small; and since it fell, some persons have cleared away the ruins and constructed a gate of the fragments. The shrine or cavity in the *Mandir* that is on a level with the ground, and the entrance to which was through the porch, is small, and covered with a Gothic arch, the plaster-work on which has been divided into small compartments, each containing an image of a *Buddha*. The whole far end of the chamber has been occupied by a throne of stone (*singhásan*) in a very bad taste, and which has been disfigured by a motley row of images taken from the ruins, and built on its front, so as to hide parts of the deity. This is a monstrous mis-shapen claub of clay, and has been well enough represented in a drawing published, if I recollect, by the late Col. Symes. The extreme rudeness of this image may, perhaps, be considered as a proof of great antiquity; and this may have been the original image placed here in the time of GAUTAMA, round which the temple has been constructed. There is, however, current a tradition of the original image having been gold, and of its having been removed by the Muhammedans; so that the present image is supposed to have been made after the sect had undergone persecution, and could no longer procure workmen capable of making a decent substitute.

Above this chamber are two others, one on the level of the old terrace, and the other still higher; but with these the falling of the porch has cut off all communication. Several of the people, however, in the vicinity, remember the porch standing, and have frequently been in the chambers, a stair from the terrace leading to the uppermost. This was quite empty, and was probably the place where treasure was deposited. The middle

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\* Del.

chamber has a throne, but the image has been removed; and if there ever was an image of gold, this was probably its place.

The terrace enlarges behind the temple, towards the west, and forms an area, on which is growing the *pippal* tree, which the orthodox suppose to have been planted by BRAHMÁ. The worshippers of GAUTAMA, on the contrary, assert that it is placed exactly in the centre of this earth, and call it *Bódhidruma*. They say that it was planted by DUGDHA-CÁMINI, king of *Singhal-dwíp* (Ceylon), 2,225 years before A.D. 1811; that is, according to them, 125 years before the building of the temple. The tree is in full vigour, and cannot, in all probability, exceed a hundred years in age; but a similar one may have existed in the same place when the temple was entire. Around its root has been lately raised a circular elevation of brick and mortar in various concentric stages; and on one of these has been placed a confused multitude of images and carved fragments of stone, taken from the ruins. On the pedestal of one of these images, representing a man with a woman sitting on his knee, which is one of the most usual figures in the district, the messengers from Ava carved an account of their visit, of which a copy is given,\* and which must render us cautious in admitting the inscriptions on the various images in this district to have any connexion with their worship or erection.

The number of images at *Buddha Gáya* is very great; and there is scarcely any one form of those that are scattered so numerous about the whole country, for eight or ten coss in all directions, which may not be found in its immediate neighbourhood belonging to the great temple. This also seems to me to have been the quarry, as it were, from which almost the whole of those, for eight or ten coss round, have been carried. Many which are now worshipped by the orthodox, and no doubt have a strong resemblance to, and many attributes of, the gods of the present Hindus, seem to me to have had the same origin. It is evident, indeed, that the people are totally careless in this respect, worshipping males by the names of females, and female images for male deities. Nay, some of the images which they worship are actually *Buddhas* in the most unequivocal forms; while on, or over the heads of others there are representations of these lawgivers, as testifying their superiority. Another mark, by which most of these images may be known to have belonged to the *Buddhas*, is

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\* East-India Company's Museum, No. 109.

the enormous size and distention of the lobe of their ears, which is very general in the images of this district, and even prevails in many of such as have in other respects the most decided appearance of the idols now worshipped. Another mark still, by which the convert asserts that all images formed by this sect may be distinguished, is a mark on the palm of the hands and soles of the feet, which is supposed to resemble the lotus flower.

In the drawings\* I have given representations of many of the most curious images remaining in the immediate vicinity of the old temple, and built into the walls, or deposited within the convent of the *Sannyásis*, and all confessedly taken from the ruins.

The converted *Sannyási* pretends, that during the present existence of the world, except those of the four *munis* or lawgivers, none of these images were ever worshipped by the followers of the *Buddhas*; and that all the others were intended as ornaments, or monuments to represent either the various inferior beings of power (*Dévatás*) who are admitted to exist by his sect as well as by the orthodox, or various persons whom their own vanity, or the affection of their own relations or disciples, wished to commemorate. This, I know, is the doctrine now entertained in Ava by the followers of GAUTAMA, and which would, of course, be taught to him by the messengers through whom he was converted: but I have great doubt how far it is applicable to the followers of the *Buddhas* who formerly existed in this country. In *Népál* I know that the *Buddhists* worship all the *Dévatás*, and especially *SIVA* and the destructive female power; and I think it probable, that the *Buddhists* here did the same. The number of *lingas*, single, in rows, or in clusters, simple and adorned with human faces, crocodile heads, &c. is fully equal to that of the *munis*, both at *Buddha Gáya* and *Barágáng*; and some of the images of the destructive female power are so remarkable and large, that I think they must have been intended as objects of worship. There can be no doubt, however, that by far the greater part of the host of images in the more decorated temples of the Hindus of all sects, is merely ornamental; and I think it probable, that most of the images of the *Buddhas* have been intended to represent the great multitude of such personages as have in former revolutions of the world obtained everlasting bliss, and were never in-

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\* East-India Company's Museum, No. 78 to 101.

tended to be worshipped, nor even revered. In the whole number, the messengers of Ava pointed out only four images, which they considered as representing the four *munis* or lawgivers who had appeared in this world, and which they knew by various annexed emblems. In the account of the embassy to Ava has been given a drawing of *Mahamuni*, who was worshipped in the great *Mandír*.

I directed drawings to be taken of the other three, which have been removed into the convent of the *Sannyásis*, to protect them from injury; but one only, which represents *Gautama*,\* was executed. The painters neglected to draw *Chandra muni* and *Sákya muni*, which, they said, exactly resembled each other and an image previously drawn: but this, probably, is a mistake. The image, which they had previously drawn, may, indeed, have had a strong resemblance to both, and may be the same with one of them; but the other must be distinguished by some emblem that escaped their notice. The images representing the *Buddhas*, whether lawgivers of this world or not, are easily known by a simple robe, a natural human shape, placid countenance, curled hair, and long ears. Although the image above-mentioned is said to represent *Gautama*, there is nothing in the inscription to ascertain that it was intended for an object of worship. It would appear from the tenor that JAYA-SÉN and KUMÁRA-SÉN, sons of PUNYABHADRA, son of SÁMANTA (all untitled persons), erected the image as a monument of their father's holiness. Another image,† according to the inscription on it, was erected by a *Rájá* VIJAYABHADRA, of whom nothing more is known.

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\* East-India Company's Museum, No. 78.

† Ibid. No. 79.